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STATINTL

THE WAR OF WITS

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Why was Khrushchev suddenly removed from power, just as Russia was beginning to eat better?

Having bought all that farm produce from the U.S., he was caught pocketing the green stamps.

How come a Soviet cosmonaut stepped out of his capsule in orbit before any American space pilot did?

The Russian *had* to—as usual, his indoor plumbing wouldn't work.

Why did the recent reorganization of the Hungarian police result in three-man patrols?

Well, it was decided every patrol needed at least one officer who could write, one officer who could read—and, of course, one to keep an eye on two such intellectual types.

These irreverent explanations are by no means the flippant witticisms they might seem. They represent, in a special way, the official comment of the U.S. government. For the little-known fact is that telling jokes has long been one of Washington's favorite ways of making known its view on the activities of other governments — particularly Communist governments with stuffy, sober-sided, humorless rulers.

Although insiders have long known and enjoyed Washington's secret war of wits against uncooperative, self-important international competitors, the procedure came under formal diplomatic fire only recently, when Egyptian strongman Gamal Abdel Nasser revealed himself a poor sport. His police expelled two American diplomats and



The Cuban satirist Silvio: "We cartoonists are like sharpshooters, snipers."

jailed several Egyptian citizens amid angry press charges that they had plotted to "undermine and overthrow the government of Egypt . . . by spreading irreverent jests."

Perhaps because this sort of accusation between two sovereign nations sounded like a fine joke in itself, the only observer to comment on it turned out to be humorist Art Buchwald. His column speculated hilariously on what might happen if the CIA *did* try to influence events around the world by scattering loaded gags. What neither Buchwald nor anyone else appears to have realized is that in sober, workaday reality, our intelligence services actually do confect and export jokes as a highly valued psychological warfare tactic.

Whether the excitable President Nasser complained with good reason is uncertain; PARADE's own investigation has failed to turn up any anti-Egyptian comedy plots. But there is a good deal of evidence that Soviet bloc countries have long been under an unremitting barrage of boffolas from the bon-mot-firing Bondmen of the CIA.

One of the latest outbreaks of laugh warfare was in Cuba. Premier Fidel Castro purged an army group commander, a police chief and the son of the foreign minister in punishment for these offenses:

High living, party-going among foreigners and circulating counter-revolutionary jokes.

There was much rejoicing by a small group of Cuban exiles in Miami who publish anti-Castro jokes in the humor magazine *Zig-Zag* and airdrop copies into Cuba. They felt Castro's angry reaction proved their barbs had hit their target. And they went to work on new gags based on the purge. One of them goes like this:

A Cuban revolutionary leader attending an embassy reception refused a drink. "No thanks," he said, "I've had one." A tray of canapés was passed his way. "No thanks," he said, "I've already eaten." One diplomat told a joke and everyone roared—except the Cuban.

"What's the matter, didn't you like it?" asked the diplomat.

"Thanks," answered the Cuban, "but I've already laughed."

One of *Zig-Zag's* latest describes a

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